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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (RENUMBERING PARAS AND TEXT)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2019/10/11  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KTIP](#) [MU](#)  
SUBJECT: OMAN ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT PARTNERING WITH USG ON TIP

CLASSIFIED BY: Richard Schmierer, Ambassador, Department of State,  
Embassy Muscat; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (C) Summary: The Ambassador encouraged the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)'s number two, Sayyid Badr, to continue working to increase efforts to combat Trafficking in Persons (TIP) in Oman. Both agreed that the goal was for Oman to be a Tier 1 country and a leader in the region on this and other human rights issues. Sayyid Badr covered several areas of progress on TIP and also discussed the Ambassador's areas of concern dealing with shelters, screening for vulnerable populations, passport withholding, labor prosecutions, and domestic workers. Sayyid Badr noted the Omanis' interagency effort on this topic and committed to continuing to encourage all areas of the GOO to engage with the USG on TIP. He emphasized that it is better when we work as good friends on this issue - with mutual trust, understanding and cooperation. End Summary.

¶2. (C) The Ambassador and poloff met with MFA Secretary General Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al-Busaidi and three additional individuals (two from the America's section and one from Sayyid Badr's office) on October 7. The embassy requested the meeting specifically to discuss TIP, but it also covered Sayyid Badr's upcoming visit to the U.S.

Sayyid Badr's Trip to DC  
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¶3. (C) The Ambassador asked Sayyid Badr what he hoped to accomplish during his upcoming meetings in Washington. Sayyid Badr noted that this would be his first trip to DC during the new administration, and he hoped to establish new contacts and better understand the new dynamics. He wanted to discuss the "normal range" of issues including the evolution of U.S. thinking - especially in the region - focusing on Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Although Oman's embassy in DC has the lead on creating his agenda, the Ambassador committed to ensuring that he met with appropriate interlocutors.

TIP Goals  
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¶4. (C) The Ambassador told Sayyid Badr that he was determined to closely work with the GOO to continue to address the TIP issue. He noted that Assistant USTR for Labor, Lewis Karesh, had a productive visit (septel) on a variety of topics that included TIP. The Ambassador informed Sayyid Badr that the Embassy had asked for someone from GTIP to visit this fall, but that it appeared that the visit would not be forthcoming. Sayyid Badr said Oman was "open and transparent" on this issue and that GTIP was most welcome to come to Oman and see for themselves that Oman is "giving it their best effort." He said that they were serious when they said that Oman wants to be a model country. The Ambassador communicated to Sayyid Badr that GTIP had created an action plan for getting Oman to move to Tier 1 and that we were hopeful that it could be shared with him during his visit to the U.S. Sayyid Badr confirmed that Oman does share the objective to become a Tier 1 country and said that they had studied Tier 1 countries from last year's report and

picked Australia as an example, saying "we want to beat them and do even more." The Ambassador and Sayyid Badr agreed that Embassy staff need good access to working level GOO contacts and Sayyid Badr said that the MFA had strongly recommended that the Royal Oman Police (ROP) grant our current request for a meeting on this topic.

#### TIP Progress

15. (C) Sayyid Badr believed that they are "on top of things here, " with their newly established National Committee to Combat Trafficking. He said the group has created a national plan and that the draft has gone to the committee for approval. He thought the plan was "quite comprehensive" and involved a coordinated effort between many ministries. Sayyid Badr explained that he met with the police last week on TIP and mentioned that there is another TIP case in progress. He conveyed that, as part of the national plan, the ROP is constructing a website on TIP - which will include the annual Oman TIP report and other data and information related to trafficking. He said they were also working on a national awareness campaign. Sayyid Badr said that they are

currently conducting programs to train personnel in various ministries and in the ROP on trafficking, but noted that Oman needs to continue to build capacity and would welcome workshops on the topic.

#### TIP Specifics

16. (C) The Ambassador brought up a number of specific issues that will need to show improvement this year and each one was discussed in some detail.

Shelters - The Ambassador mentioned that we are hearing inconsistent information regarding the progress on a permanent shelter for TIP victims. Sayyid Badr noted that was likely because there are currently two ideas - to have a care facility next to the newly constructed prison (in Lizq, about 100 miles from Muscat), or to have a smaller shelter closer to Muscat and possibly additional ones in Salalah and Sohar. He said it was a question of resources and that the shelter was under the jurisdiction of the ROP.

Screening of vulnerable populations - Sayyid Badr said that they are questioning illegal immigrants to determine if they have been trafficked. He also noted that they do periodic amnesty programs for foreign workers to allow them to return home if they have fallen into illegal status.

Passport holding - Sayyid Badr emphasized that holding employee passports is against the law; but asked what employers should do if employees want their documents held by the employer. Another member of his group suggested a neutral place, saying that "someone should start a business."

Prosecution of forced labor cases - Sayyid Badr did not have a particular response to this point, only noting that there are cases ongoing.

Domestic Laborers - Sayyid Badr thought that current Omani labor law applied to domestics (Note: Omani Labor Law Royal Decree 35/2003; Chapter 2; Article 2; "The provisions of this law shall not apply to: " Item 3 "Domestic servants working inside houses or outside houses such as driver, maid and cook and those with similar jobs." End Note.) He asked how the U.S. monitors compliance with domestic servant laws.

17. (C) Comment: Sayyid Badr appeared to be relaxed and was very receptive to the Ambassador's approach in dealing with this often contentious issue. While emphasizing progress in many areas, he was also open to areas where further work will be required. The three additional meeting attendees were extremely engaged, taking copious notes, especially when an area for improvement was discussed. The MFA has a lead role on TIP, but the actual implementation is the responsibility of a variety of other government entities. Based on other sources of information, it

would seem that most agencies may be reporting more progress to the MFA than has actually been achieved. Follow-up meetings with these groups will be required to flesh out additional details on the plans Sayyid Badr discussed. End Comment.  
Schmierer